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ABSTRACT

Changes in foreign student services and tuition and admission policies affecting foreign students from 1983 to 1985 were surveyed at 681 public colleges and universities. With annual percentage increases below 1%, most colleges had stable (42%) or declining (30%) foreign enrollment since 1983. A third of the schools did not maintain foreign student services at fully adequate levels because of a combination of financial constraints, lack of interest in foreign students, and personnel and office space shortages. Schools were also concerned about foreign students' English language proficiency, and many schools were raising English test score requirements. A total of 43% of the schools indicated that admission standards for foreign students have become stiffer than those for domestic students. About half of the schools required foreign students to demonstrate their ability to cover their educational expenses before admission. While little statewide action has been taken, the action that did occur focused primarily on tuition policy. Legislative or court action taken on tuition policy occurred in Texas, California, New Mexico, and Idaho. Actions by other states on English language proficiency requirements for foreign teaching assistants are also specified. (SW)

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by

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A SURVEY OF POLICY CHANGES:

FOREIGN STUDENTS IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

FROM 1983 TO 1985

by

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New York, New York 10017

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INTRODUCTION

In 1981 and again in 1983, the Institute of International Education published a survey report on recent policy changes towards foreign students in public institutions of higher education. Three areas of policy were selected for attention at that time: a) the provision of special services to foreign students; b) the tuition that foreign students are charged; and c) the requirements stipulated for their admission. After the publication of the first study in 1981, it seemed to IIE staff desirable to repeat it periodically to enable the higher education community to keep abreast of developments that might affect the scale and composition of the flow of foreign students and their distribution among institutions in the United States.

The 1985 survey suggests that conditions for foreign students in public institutions of higher education have eroded somewhat, continuing the trend noted in previous surveys:

A. In many institutions, foreign student services have not kept pace with student increases over the years. Although the impact on staff has been adverse, the direct effects on students have been far less discernable.

B. Foreign students are now under more pressure to demonstrate ability to pay for their educational expenses before admission.

C. Schools are concerned about their foreign students' English language proficiency, and a handful of states have passed

legislation requiring testing in English language proficiency for foreign teaching assistants (and/or faculty).

D. Overall, institutions have been as welcoming as before, or even more so, to foreign students who can demonstrate ability to pay and are academically qualified.

The Questionnaire

IIE distributed a questionnaire to all two- and four-year public institutions in the United States, 1,491 in all. Generally, questionnaires were sent to foreign student advisors in these public institutions. There were 696 questionnaires returned in time to be analyzed. Of the returned surveys, 15 institutions reported having no foreign students, and these were not included in the analysis. Thus, the sample size is 681 which represents 46% of all public institutions of higher education. Two-year institutions represent 58% of the sample (397 institutions), while four-year institutions represent 42% of the sample (284 institutions.) It should be noted that most foreign students attend four-year institutions (87%) rather than two-year colleges (13%, see Open Doors), hence two-year institutions are overrepresented in our sample.

As with the two previous surveys, three areas of foreign student policy were addressed. Institutions were asked to report on changes made in foreign student services, as well as on changes in tuition policy and admissions policy toward foreign students during the past two years. Also institutions were asked to report any legislative or court action in their state which might have affected foreign students.

student numbers as well. Although some researchers have demonstrated that compensation is occurring in a few disciplines, such as in graduate engineering fields, there is no evidence that whole institutions are compensating in this manner.

Foreign Student Services

Most institutions reported neither significant expansion nor reduction of foreign student services from 1983 to 1985. However, 24% of the responding schools did indicate some expansion of services, and 7% reported a reduction in services to foreign students. Of those with an expansion of foreign student services, about half (46%) believed the expansion to be comparable to the expansion of other student services. A third believed the expansion to be greater than in other services at their institution, and 21% reported a smaller expansion in foreign student services than in other student services. For those schools reporting a reduction in foreign student services, 20% reported a reduction in services greater than other student services.

Almost a third (31%) of the institutions reported that foreign student services have not kept up with increases in foreign students over the past few years. Two-thirds of these schools attribute inadequate services to financial constraints at their school, but almost a quarter (23%) believed it to be due to a lack of interest in foreign students' problems. The remaining schools that reported their foreign student services as inadequate indicated the lack of office space and staff, as well as the limited use of services by foreign students, as reasons why services have not kept pace with increases in foreign students.

When asked if the lack of services has had an effect on foreign students, two-thirds of these institutions reported no noticeable effects on them. The remaining third believed the inadequate services have affected foreign students either academically or personally. The effects on staff members are more pronounced; 26% of all responding institutions believed that inadequate foreign student services have had noticeable effects on staff while 16% reported no noticeable effect on staff. The effects on staff are several, with 12% of the sample listing general strain, 5% indicating difficulties in dealing with immigration problems, 5% mentioning difficulties in dealing with student's financial problems, and 4% reporting other difficulties. Thus, a quarter of the institutions reported that their staff's ability to deal with foreign students has deteriorated, but only 11% actually reported that these inadequate services are directly affecting students.

Tuition Policy

With regard to tuition policy, we asked institutions first, to report any special financial requirements for foreign students that do not exist for domestic students. Most institutions (60%) reported that special financial requirements do exist for foreign students. The most common requirement reported (52%) is the requirement that foreign students must demonstrate financial solvency. Other requirements mentioned are special fees or surcharges for foreign students (12%), a required deposit from foreign students (4%), and mandatory health insurance for foreign students (2%). Special fees or surcharges that exceed $250 per semester are reported by 5% of the institutions.

Second, we asked if the number of tuition waivers given to foreign students has increased or decreased over the past two years. The large majority (85%) reported no change in the number of tuition waivers and 9% reported an increase. There are 20 institutions (3%) that reported a decrease in tuition waivers, and another 20 schools (3%) that have eliminated all tuition waivers to foreign students. The reasons given for the change in policy with regard to tuition waivers or financial requirements are the difficulty foreign students have in meeting their financial obligations (13%) or the cost of special services to foreign students (5%). A dozen schools attribute the changes to action taken by state legislators (see page 10: "A Note on the States"). Seven schools (1%) made changes in tuition policy to attract more foreign students.

Admissions Policy

In the area of admissions policy toward foreign students, 14% of the responding institutions have instituted more restrictive admissions requirements. The most common action (8%) has been to raise the cut-off point on TOEFL scores. The remaining schools have changed other admissions requirements.

Reasons for the new admissions requirements are the desire to obtain better qualified foreign students who will complete their degree (4%), to increase the number of foreign students (3%), or to improve the English speaking ability of new students (2%). Finally, 3% of the sample implemented new admissions requirements to limit either the number of all foreign students, or the number of students from particular countries. Only a handful of schools (1%) have instituted quotas for foreign students over the past two years. Schools instituted these new

restrictive admissions requirements because of concern over cost (1%), concern about maintaining adequate foreign student services (2%), concern about the diversity of the student body (1%), or concern about the effect of foreign students on the academic quality of their institution (1%).

When efforts are made to increase the number of foreign students, the reasons given are the desire to increase the diversity of the student body (31%), to maintain or enhance academic quality (18%), or to compensate for the dearth of domestic students (10%). Overall, half of the institutions (48%) believed that admissions standards for foreign students are equal to those for domestic students. 43% believed them to be stiffer, while only 1% of the schools believed them to be easier. Most institutions reported no change in their receptiveness of foreign students; as many as 25% reported that foreign students are more welcome at their institutions than two years ago, and only 1% reported that they are less welcome.

CONCLUSION

Changes Since 1983

With annual percentage increases below one percent, most institutions have had stable (42%) or declining (30%) foreign enrollment since 1983. Nevertheless, a third of the schools have not been able to maintain foreign student services at fully adequate levels because of a combination of financial constraints, lack of interest in foreign students, and personnel and office space shortages. However, many schools indicated that they have or are planning to expand these services, while only 7% reported a reduction in foreign student services.

Most of the changes made in tuition and admissions policy seem not to be intended to limit the number of foreign students, but rather to insure that the students will be able to satisfy all of their financial and academic obligations. Institutions are paying more attention to potential students' English language ability, especially foreign graduate students who teach. Also many school are raising TOEFL score requirements to insure that students will have the language skills needed to complete their degrees. About half of the schools now require foreign students to demonstrate their ability to cover their educational expenses before they are allowed to matriculate. Despite these new restrictions, most schools reported that foreign students are as welcome (74%) or more so (25%) than two years ago.

In the 1983 survey of policy changes, we concluded that certain favorable conditions for foreign students have eroded noticeably from 1981 to 1983: services had suffered somewhat, financial aid had been reduced to some extent, and requirements for admission had become somewhat more difficult to meet. We advised, at that time, that these trends warranted careful attention in order to determine whether they might come to affect foreign student flows with increasing severity.

The current survey suggests that many of these trends have continued at least to a minor degree. Most schools are modifying their policies toward foreign students in order to obtain the most academically and financially qualified candidates. They do not seem to wish to limit the number of foreign students per se. For example, very few school have instituted quotas on foreign students. Nevertheless, 43% of the responding institutions believed admission standards for foreign students to be stiffer than those for domestic students, and about half (48%) believe them to be comparable.

A NOTE ON THE STATES

IIE's previous surveys, in 1981 and 1983, examined the extent to which public institutions were affected by state legislators or other state agencies with regard to foreign student policy. Overall, little statewide action had been taken. When these actions did occur, they focused primarily on tuition policy. From 1983 to 1985, action taken by state legislatures or agencies again focused mostly on tuition policy. However, a few states established English language requirements for foreign teaching assistants.

When schools were asked to describe the approach towards foreign students they observed at the level of the state higher education system, 68% reported that no restrictive action has been taken. A small minority of those responding (11%) felt pressure to cut services and financial aid or to raise the admissions requirements of foreign students. In contrast, 6% of the institutions felt less pressure to do so over the last two years. Finally, 8% of those responding reported that restrictive action has been taken at the statewide level. These included schools from Texas (7 institutions), California (5), Oklahoma (4), and Ohio (3).

It seems that when restrictive action is taken at the statewide level it generally affects two-year colleges more than four-year institutions. If we examine only two-year schools, the percentage of institutions reporting no restrictive action taken drops to 37% while for four-year institutions the percentage rises to 71%. We also considered the possibility that more restrictive action might have occurred in those

states with the largest foreign student populations. However, when we compared the ten states with the largest foreign student enrollments to the other 40 states and territories, we found the percentages reporting no restrictive statewide action to be comparable.

Only nine schools reported a court decision in their state with implications for foreign students, and 79% (538 institutions) reported no legislative action in their state toward foreign students. Legislative or court action taken in the area of tuition policy occurred in the following states:

Texas students on certain non-immigrant visas (the G1, G2, G3, G4, A1, A2, E, and NATO-student visas) are now eligible to apply for state residency and pay in-state tuition and fees. This policy is under review by the Coordination Board of the Texas College and University System to determine if students on E and NATO visas should continue to be able to apply for state residency. Marriage to U.S. citizens by foreign students will no longer allow the foreign student to be eligible for in-state tuition and fees.

A California court decision held that undocumented aliens in the University of California system are eligible for in-state tuition and fees. Many schools mentioned this case presumably because it might have repercussions for all foreign students in the state. Also, foreign students who apply for political asylum are eligible for in-state tuition and fees.

And in New Mexico, the State Board of Educational Finance increased tuition for foreign students in the summer of 1985, but after six weeks, it rescinded this policy.

The State Board of Education in Idaho rescinded a policy requiring a $50.00 alien fee from all foreign students. Although Washington state had cut tuition waivers from 1981 to 1983, schools in Washington reported that both tuition waivers and financial aid have been increased for foreign students at the state level during the past two years.

Another area of foreign student policy where state legislators have been active, is in establishing requirements in English language proficiency for foreign teaching assistants. Actions were taken with regard to foreign teaching assistant in the following states:

In Ohio foreign teaching assistants must be tested for English language proficiency.

The legislators of Kansas, Florida, and Minnesota have mandated requirements in English language proficiency for foreign teaching assistants and faculty.

The University of Missouri school system is beginning to test all foreign born graduate students in English language proficiency before they are given teaching assistantships. A bill has been introduced into the Missouri legislature that would require such testing at all state schools.

And in Nebraska, there is pressure to raise the English language competence of foreign teaching assistants, but so far no legislative action has been taken.

No school reported legislative or court action in the areas of foreign students services or admissions policy.